6. Whenever illegally mined coal and implements of illegal mining are seized during the course of raids, the same are handed over to the local police and FIRs are lodged.

7. Close liaison is kept with the district authorties seeking their help and co-operation in curbing illegal mining.

Import of Coal

2831. MISS MABEL REBELLO: Will the Minister of COAL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether coal is imported, if so, the names of those countries with details of imports over the last two years;

(b) how far it is cost-effective and more useful to our consumers; and

(c) whether it has any effect on home market, if so, the over-riding compulsions to import?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL AND MINES (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) Yes, Sir. Coal is being imported from other countries. Major countries from which coal is being imported alongwith quantities are given below for the last two years:

(in million tonnes)

Country	2000-2001	2001-2002
1	2	3
Australia	13.116	10.849
Indonesia	2.553	3.424
S. Africa	3.175	3.108
China	1.729	2.556
Russia	0.057	0.276
New Zeland	0.123	0.173
U.S.A.	0.058	0.043
Canada	0.032	0.037
Others	0.087	0.082
TOTAL	20.930	20.548

(b) Coal is imported by the consumers due to (i) non availability/ inadequate availability of the required quality indigenously, (ii) for use by blending with indigenous coal on environmental consideration and (iii) considerations of cost. Domestic coal is cheaper at pithead per tonnes basis. However, domestic coal becomes uncompetitive per tonne basis in certain littoral areas due to high Railway freight and low heat content of indigenous coal.

(c) Indian coal, in general, by virtue of its drift origin is having high ash content as coaly matter is intimately mixed with mineral matter during formation stage. Further, reserve of low ash content coking & non-coking coal is very limited in India.

In contrast, mineral matter content in coal from most other coal producing countries is low due to *in-situ* origin of its formation. Hence, the imported coal is superior in calorific value and is having low ash content.

As a consequence, steel/pig iron plants using blast furnace, soda ash manufacturers, ferro-alloys industries as well as merchand cokeries are importing low ash coking coal/low ash metallurgical coke (LAMC) since the same are not available as per qualitative and quantitative requirements indigenously.

Moreover, corex plants and certain captive power plants (like Malco) are also importing low ash non-coking coal due to availability of limited quantity of superior grade non-coking coal indigenously.

Some cement plants are also importing non-coking coal on considerations of cost-economics and logistics.

Due to non-availability of sufficient quantity of low ash coking coal, integrated steel plants are also importing coking coal in bulk.

Raw coal offtake in tonnage from CIL has not suffered on account of imports and the same has steadily gone up year to year since 1992-93 upto current period (barring 1998-99 when there was industrial recession in the country).

Exploration of Methane Gas

2832. MISS MABEL REBELLO: Will the Minister of COAL AND MINES be pleased to state: